

Berwyn, CMAP seek public feedback on proposed zoning changes

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BERWYN – Berwyn residents are encouraged to attend one of two scheduled public open houses to hear proposed changes to

Berwyn's zoning ordinance and offer feedback.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which has been working with the city of Berwyn to draft the updated ordinance, is hosting the sessions May 8 and 13.

While there aren't many major changes, CMAP "cleaned up" the ordinance, replacing outdated language with simpler language, making it more user-friendly for both residents and business owners. The zoning ordinance regulates land use and affects all properties in the city.

CMAP presented a draft of the ordinance to the Berwyn City Council at its April 25 meeting, and it will submit a final draft to the council later this summer. CMAP began working with the city about four years ago to draft the new ordinance.

The current ordinance is decades old, and it needed to be updated, said Tony Griffin, executive director of the Berwyn Development Corporation.

"We're discussing green space, historic preservation and lot sizes, and we want to hear from the public," he said. "The old ordinance is very cumbersome, and this will be a document that a business owner can read easily, and it will benefit property owners. The old ordinance has 36 chapters, and this one will have about 12 chapters. It will be on the books for the next 20 to 30 years, and we want to get it right."

One major component of the new ordinance is protection for Berwyn's historic bungalow houses, by creating a new R-2 Bungalow District. The ordinance protects the character and style of the houses and has special architecture requirements to maintain the city's historic fabric, said Kristin Ihnchak, principal planner at CMAP.

"A lot of Berwyn's image is based on these historic homes, and people want them protected," she said. "Our team worked closely with the historic preservation committee on the ordinance. We have protections to help new developments match existing character. It will be on the same scale as the existing ordinance, although it does have some exemptions. But this maintains a lot of existing requirements."

The ordinance does create one new commercial district, splitting the Cermak Road corridor and Depot District into two separate commercial districts. But because Berwyn is so well-established, the ordinance doesn't change any residential districts to commercial districts or vice versa, Ihnchak said.

"There are so many commercial corridors in Berwyn, so it's not necessary to add more," she said. "But the Depot District is the downtown area of the community, and there are more design requirements. We want to make sure it's pedestrian friendly. The ordinance is more flexible on Cermak Road and Roosevelt Road."

Ihnchak said she thinks the new ordinance will lead to an increase in development, in part because it will make it easier for developments to get approved.

"Hopefully this will demystify zoning and will encourage development that moves forward. We did a lot to streamline development," she said.

The ordinance also addresses signage that primarily affects the commercial corridors. Mayor Robert Lovero said the

old signage ordinance is very complicated, and the new one makes requirements easier for businesses to understand.

“We’re trying to get uniformity with respect to signage in corridors because the signage is a lot different now than it was when the old code was drafted,” he said. “[The ordinance] is still not complete, but CMAP has done a great job. We still have the hearings, and it’s important to hear what residents have to say. We want to hear if there are major disagreements, or agreements, with what’s being presented. That way we can make informed decisions.”

If you go

What: Berwyn draft zoning ordinance open houses

When: 5 to 7 p.m. May 8 and 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. May 13

Where: Berwyn Police Department, 6401 W. 31st St., Berwyn

Info: cmap.is/ita-berwyn-zoning